

### The impact of social change on social assistance: two cohorts of German welfare recipients compared

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**Sonderforschungsbereich 186  
der Universität Bremen**

**Statuspassagen und Risikolagen  
im Lebensverlauf**

**The Impact of Social Change on Social Assistance  
Two Cohorts of German Welfare Recipients Compared**

**von**

**Petra Buhr und Andreas Weber**

Arbeitspapier Nr. 31

Bremen, Februar 1996



## *Vorwort*

Das Teilprojekt „Sozialhilfedynamik“ des Sonderforschungsbereichs hat dazu beigetragen, einen neuen Zugang zur Erforschung von Armut in Deutschland zu etablieren, die dynamische oder auch lebenslauftheoretische Armutsforschung, die auf entsprechende Forschungsansätze in den USA zurückgeht. Neu ist die systematische Berücksichtigung der zeitlichen Dimension von Armut und die Untersuchung von Armut in ihrem Verlauf. Auf der Grundlage von Längsschnittdaten werden Wege in die Armut, durch die Armut und auch aus ihr heraus untersucht.

Die bisherigen Ergebnisse des Projekts, die der wissenschaftlichen und sozialpolitischen Öffentlichkeit in mehreren Monographien, zahlreichen Aufsätzen und Zeitungsartikeln bekannt gemacht worden sind, zeichnen ein differenzierteres Armutsbild als viele herkömmliche Analysen. Sozialhilfebezug führt nicht zwangsläufig zu dauerhafter sozialer Ausgrenzung. Sozialhilfeverläufe sind vielmehr in zeitlicher Hinsicht sehr vielfältig und häufig nur von kurzer Dauer.

Die Analysen zur Dauer des Sozialhilfebezugs beruhten bisher auf der Erhebung einer Bremer Kohorte von 586 Neuantragstellern des Jahres 1983 (Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt), deren Sozialhilfeverlauf anhand ihrer Akten bis 1989 rekonstruiert wurde. Diese Beschränkung auf eine einzige Neuantragskohorte hat dem Projekt hier und da den Vorwurf eingetragen, nicht mehr „up to date“ zu sein. Schließlich hätten sich die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Bedingungen seit 1983 erheblich verändert.

Der Frage nach dem Einfluß des sozialen Wandels auf die Sozialhilfe soll in der laufenden dritten Projektphase durch die Erhebung einer neuen Antragskohorte nachgegangen werden. Es handelt sich dabei um Neuantragsteller des Jahres 1989, deren Weg durch die Sozialhilfe bis 1994 untersucht wurde.

In dem vorliegenden Arbeitspapier werden erste Ergebnisse eines Vergleichs der beiden Antragskohorten vorgestellt. Im Mittelpunkt steht dabei die Frage, ob die Dauer des Sozialhilfebezugs, wie häufig angenommen wird, über die Zeit zugenommen hat, eine Frage, die wie gezeigt wird, gruppenspezifisch zu beantworten ist.

Prof. Dr. Ansgar Weymann  
Sprecher des Sfb 186

## *Zusammenfassung*

Ziel des vorliegenden Arbeitspapiers ist es, den Einfluß sozialen Wandels auf die Sozialhilfe zu untersuchen. Inwieweit schlagen sich Veränderungen der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Verhältnisse in der Sozialhilfe nieder? Dazu werden zwei Kohorten von Neuantragstellern auf Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt in Bremen verglichen.

Die empirischen Ergebnisse sprechen dagegen, daß es in den 90er Jahren schwerer ist, wieder dauerhaft unabhängig von Sozialhilfe zu werden als in den 80er Jahren, wie häufig angenommen wird. Insgesamt gesehen gibt es in der Antragskohorte 1989 mehr Kurzzeitbezieher und weniger Langzeitbezieher als in der Kohorte 1983. Die sozialstrukturelle Zusammensetzung der beiden Antragskohorten unterscheidet sich jedoch in einem wichtigen Punkt: Fast die Hälfte der Neuantragsteller des Jahres 1989 sind Aus- und Übersiedler und Asylbewerber, während es in der alten Antragskohorte weniger als ein Zehntel waren. Zuwanderung hat sich damit zu einem wichtigen Einflußfaktor auf die Sozialhilfe entwickelt: Ohne die Zuwanderer wäre die Zahl der Neuantragsteller im Jahre 1989 gegenüber 1983 zurückgegangen, und die Bezugsdauer wäre länger.

Verglichen mit Zuwanderung liegt der Einfluß anderer Faktoren auf die Sozialhilfe weniger deutlich zu Tage. Veränderte Bedingungen auf dem Arbeitsmarkt spiegeln sich möglicherweise darin wider, daß es in der neuen Kohorte etwas leichter zu sein scheint, die Sozialhilfe durch Arbeitsaufnahme dauerhaft zu beenden. Die längere Dauer bei Paaren mit Kindern könnte mit der Entwicklung auf dem Wohnungsmarkt zusammenhängen, die Zunahme von Alleinerziehenden mit Individualisierungsprozessen und die Zunahme von Mehrfachbezug unter jüngeren Antragstellern mit veränderten Einstellungen zur Sozialhilfe.

In Gegensatz zur Gesamtpopulation ist der Anteil der Kurzzeitbezieher unter den ansässigen Deutschen und Ausländern zurückgegangen und der Anteil der Langzeitbezieher leicht angestiegen. Soweit bisher erkennbar, ist die Zunahme der Bezugsdauer bei den ansässigen Deutschen und Ausländern auf eine veränderte Zusammensetzung dieser Gruppe zurückzuführen. So ist der Anteil von „Wartefällen“ zurückgegangen, die in der Regel nur kurze Zeit Sozialhilfe beziehen, bis vorrangige Leistungen aus der Sozialversicherung einsetzen. Wenig deutet dagegen darauf hin, daß sich die Chancen zum Ausstieg aus der Sozialhilfe zwischen den 80er und den 90er Jahren dramatisch verschlechtert haben oder daß die Bereitschaft zugenommen hat, sich im sozialen Netz auszuruhen.

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We would like to thank Lutz Leisering for valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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Duration of poverty and social assistance has been neglected in German poverty research for a long time, and researchers have commonly used cross-sectional data. Poverty and social assistance payments were seen as unchangeable characteristics of people or groups of people. In other words: The dominant public image of poverty was long-term. However, reliable data on the duration of poverty were not available. Since the end of the eighties a change of perspective has occurred: Dynamic research on poverty in Germany is building up using new longitudinal data sets. Results from the German Socio-Economic Panel (cf. Krause 1994) or the Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files (Buhr 1995, Leibfried/Leisering et al. 1995, 1996, Ludwig 1996) show that for most people poverty and social assistance are only short phases in the life-course and that only a minority of people stay on social assistance for many years. This corresponds to results from the USA where dynamic research on poverty has a longer tradition following the pioneering work of Mary Jo Bane and David Ellwood who first used a spell based approach to the study of poverty and social assistance (cf. Bane/Ellwood 1986, 1994).

However, up to now, relatively few studies, at least in Germany, have asked for the impact of social change on poverty and social assistance with regard to duration, e.g. whether the extent of short-term or long-term receipt of assistance has changed over historical time. Huff Stevens (1994), using data from the Michigan Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), found that changes in exit rates off social assistance in the USA corresponded to economic conditions. In the recession years of 1985 and 1983, for example, the exit rates were 0.47 and 0.45, while in 1984 the exit rate was 0.58. Hoynes and MaCurdy (1994) report that the length of welfare spells in the USA decreased between the mid-seventies and early eighties, but increased in the eighties. The proportion of welfare spells lasting seven or more years, for example, decreased from 22% in 1975 to 15% in 1980 and increased again to 21% in 1985. In this study, labor-market conditions appear to have played only a minor role, whereas some of the shift in exit rates could be explained by changes in benefit levels. Several other authors in the USA have analyzed the influence of changes in program characteristics on participation rates and duration without reaching clear results (cf. Moffit 1985, 1987).

In Germany, a widespread assumption is that duration of social assistance has increased during the eighties due to economic crisis and increase in long-term unemployment. However, the sparse empirical evidence points into a different direction: Andreß (1994) and Samson (1992) report

for the city of Bielefeld that time on social assistance has decreased continuously since 1977. And a recent study of Hagen and Hock (1995) shows only little overall variation in duration between 1988 and 1992 in a small city in Southwest Germany.

Previous results of the Bremen longitudinal study on social assistance careers have shown that about half of all people who started to receive social assistance in Bremen in 1983 („1983 cohort“ ) already left assistance within the first year. Less than 10% received social assistance continuously, that is without interruptions, for more than five years (cf. Buhr 1995, Leibfried/Leisering et al. 1995). However, since the eighties major political, economic and social changes have occurred which may have influenced the structure of the recipients of social assistance and the length of time people stay on assistance.

Thus we ask: *Is it more difficult to leave social assistance in the nineties than in the eighties?* To clarify this question, we will compare the 1983 cohort with a more recent cohort of new recipients: people whose first spell of assistance began in 1989. Our aim is to give first descriptive insights into the differences between two groups of recipients entering social assistance at different points-in-time and thus facing different political, social and economic conditions. We will not go here into sophisticated statistical modelling of the events and structures that lead to multiple or long-term receipt of social assistance (cf. Buhr/Weber 1996). Before we present the empirical results of the comparison of the two cohorts, we summarize the social, political and economic changes during the eighties and at the beginning of the nineties and their presumable influence on social assistance.

## 1 Why temporal patterns of social assistance might have changed

In 1990 the social, economic and political situation in Germany was different from that at the beginning of the eighties. The major political event was, without doubt, the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 and German reunification. However, other economic and social changes occurred: immigration from Eastern Europe gained importance, labor market and employment conditions changed, social benefits were cut and new regulations were introduced, the process of individualization of life styles continued, attitudes towards social assistance changed, and rents increased.



These changes may have influenced social assistance in several ways: *First*, they may have affected the socio-demographic structure of the caseload of social assistance, e.g. the proportion of types of household, gender or age groups. Changes in the structure of recipients may, in turn, have consequences for time on assistance as duration of assistance differs by social groups. Longer duration, for example, may result from an increase in the proportion of groups with a high risk of long-term receipt, such as lone parents. *Second*, societal and economic developments may have changed opportunity structures, e.g. the chances to leave social assistance by finding a new job. *Third*, they may have influenced behavior or attitudes which are related to duration of assistance, e.g. the inclination to apply or reapply for assistance at all.

Figure 1: Impact of social change on time on social assistance

<i>Determinants</i>	<i>Aspects of time on assistance</i>		
	duration	recidivism	time off
<b>Immigration</b>			
increase in number of German immigrants from the former GDR and Eastern Europe	—	?	?
increase in number of refugees	+	—	?
<b>Labor market</b>			
decrease in unemployment	—	—	+
decrease in long-term unemployment	—	+	?
<b>Social policy</b>			
„Beschäftigungsförderungsgesetz“ (promotion of temporary and irregular employment)	+	+	—
„Hilfe zur Arbeit“ (employment schemes for recipients of social assistance)	—	—	+
<b>Individualization</b>	+ —	+ —	+ —
<b>Changing attitudes towards social assistance</b>	+	+	—
<b>Housing shortage and increasing rents</b>	+	?	?

In the following we analyze the impact of social change on three time related aspects of social assistance: *duration*, that is the length of single spells of assistance and total time on assistance, *recidivism*, that is the risk of having a second or further spell of assistance, and *time off* social

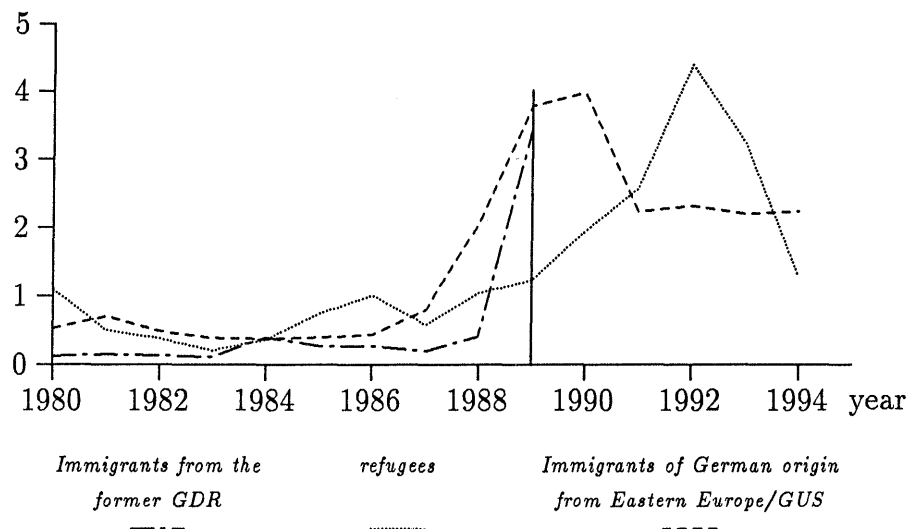
assistance, that is the time period elapsed until a second spell of assistance begins (see figure 1).

*Immigration:* Immigration and growing proportions of foreigners are relatively new developments in Germany. In 1961, only 1.2% of the total population were foreigners, in 1970 it was 4.3%, in 1987 6.8%, in 1990 8.4% and in 1993 8.5% (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1995a: 67).

We can differentiate between different sources of immigration and groups of immigrants, respectively: foreign workers, immigrants from the former German Democratic Republic, immigrants of German origin from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and refugees.

Figure 2: Immigrants in the Federal Republic of Germany

hundred thousand



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistical Office) 1982 ff.

During the sixties, due to a shortage in labour force, foreign workers were recruited from southern Europe, mainly Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece. Accordingly, the number of foreigners in Germany grew from 686.000 in 1961 to 2.6 million in 1970. In 1973 the recruitment of foreign workers was stopped because of the economic crisis and increasing unemployment rates. Only family members were still allowed to come.

During the eighties, new groups of immigrants became important: The number of immigrants from the German Democratic Republic, the former Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe - in the following we call them

„German immigrants“ - increased dramatically from less than 50.000 in 1983 to more than 700.000 in 1989. The number of refugees and applicants for political asylum rose, too, from about 20.000 in 1983 to about 120.000 in 1989 and a peak of more than 400.000 in 1992 (see figure 2). All immigrants are allocated to the different federal states of Germany according to specified quota. In 1989, 5718 German immigrants and 1580 refugees came to the city of Bremen.

German immigrants and refugees usually are dependent on social assistance, at least for some time after their arrival. Thus, we can expect more immigrants among new recipients of social assistance at the end of the eighties. As most German immigrants are entitled to social transfers such as unemployment benefits or old age pensions, most of them will leave social assistance quickly after a short period of waiting for the first payment of these transfers from the social insurance system. Some of them, however, will have to reapply for social assistance because these other transfers become insufficient with rising family size or because they have difficulties in entering a stable job career. Overall, this may result in a shortening of duration of assistance which is indicated by „duration -“ in figure 1<sup>1</sup>, while we cannot foresee the net effect of an increase in German immigrants on recidivism and time off; this is indicated by „?“ in the figure.

Refugees, by contrast, will stay on assistance continuously for a longer time until they get political asylum or are deported to their home countries. An increasing number of refugees, thus, may lead to longer duration and a decrease in the proportion of cases with multiple spells („duration +“, „recidivism -“). Time off assistance probably will not be affected much by an increase in the number of refugees because most of them just have one spell. Until 1991 refugees were not allowed to work at all. However, since then they can obtain a permission to work which may have an effect on duration of assistance.

*Labor market conditions:* The rate of unemployment in Germany increased from 3.8% in 1980 to 9.1% in 1983 and 9.3% in 1985. Since the mid eighties the situation on the labor market has slightly improved as indicated by a decrease of the rate to 7.9% in 1989 and 6.3% in 1991. During the nineties, however, the rate has increased again to 9.2% in 1994 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1990:111, 1995a: 122).

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<sup>1</sup>We have to take into account, however, that in 1993 entitlement to unemployment benefits was changed for German immigrants.

We should note that in Bremen unemployment rates are much above average.<sup>2</sup>

As unemployment rates decreased between 1983 and 1989, we can thus hypothesize that there will be less unemployed people entering social assistance in the new cohort. The decrease in unemployment may also result in a shortening of time on assistance („duration –“), a lower proportion of recipients with multiple spells („recidivism –“ ) and longer periods of independence of social assistance („time off +“ ) in the 1989 cohort as compared to 1983 as it might be easier to find a new job and remain in employment.

Long-term unemployment, defined as unemployment lasting more than one year, strongly increased during the eighties, from 21.3% in 1982 to a peak of 32.6% of all unemployed in 1988. Since the end of the eighties, the proportion of long-term unemployed has decreased continuously to about 26% in 1993. In 1994, however, long-term unemployment rose again to 32.5% (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1982 ff.). The pattern of duration that corresponds to long-term unemployment is long and continuous receipt of social assistance. Accordingly, the decrease in long-term unemployment which occurred at the end of the eighties may result in a shortening of time on assistance („duration –“) and an increase in the proportion of recipients with multiple spells („recidivism +“ ) while the effect on time off assistance is not clear.

*Social policy:* Since the beginning of the eighties entitlement to unemployment benefits has been changed and the level of unemployment benefits has been reduced, at least for some groups of the unemployed. This resulted in the „new poverty“ of the unemployed (cf. Balsen et al. 1984) and meant that more and more unemployed people had to apply for at least supplementary social assistance. We should also note that in Germany unemployment benefits are reduced after one year of unemployment (from the higher level „Arbeitslosengeld“ to the lower level „Arbeitslosenhilfe“ ).

Besides the interventions into unemployment benefits there are at least two other developments in the area of social policy which have influenced employment conditions and, in turn, social assistance: On the one hand, the „Beschäftigungsförderungsgesetz“ (Employment Promotion Act) of 1985 promoted irregular and temporary employment which may result

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<sup>2</sup>In Bremen, the unemployment rate was 5.3% in 1980, 13.1% in 1983, 14.6% in 1989, 10.7% in 1991 and 13.7% in 1994 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1990:111, 1995a: 122).

in multiple spells of unemployment with often insufficient levels of unemployment benefits and in longer and multiple spells of social assistance with shorter periods of independence of benefits („duration +“, „recidivism +“, „time off -“). On the other hand, „Hilfe zur Arbeit“, employment schemes for social assistance recipients, have gained importance since the end of the eighties which may result in shorter social assistance spells, decreasing proportions of recipients with multiple spells and longer periods without assistance („duration -“, „recidivism -“, „time off +“).

*Individualization:* Like most Western societies Germany faces a process of individualization (cf. Beck 1986): Traditional institutions such as the family have lost importance, values and attitudes towards work have changed, life courses and biographical patterns have become more diverse and less predictable. This is indicated, e.g. by an increase in single-person-households<sup>3</sup>, divorce<sup>4</sup> and births out-of-wedlock<sup>5</sup> with the result of a diversity of family forms apart from the traditional married couple.<sup>6</sup> As the German social assistance scheme builds on the concept of „normal biography“, „normal family“ and „normal employment career“ - continuous and full time employment of the male breadwinner - more and more groups are excluded from unemployment insurance and fall on social assistance, at least temporarily. We can assume that this process of individualization has still accelerated during the eighties and will influence social assistance.

However, it is difficult to predict the net effect of the different dimensions of the individualization process on social assistance. This is indicated by „+ -“ in figure 1. On the one hand, we can expect an increase in non-traditional family forms like lone parents among new recipients of social assistance at the end of the eighties. As lone parents mostly are continuously dependent on social assistance for quite a long time because of the inability to work as long as the children are small this may in

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<sup>3</sup>The proportion of one-person-households increased from 30.2% in 1980 to 34.9% in 1989 and 35.3% in 1993 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1982 ff.).

<sup>4</sup>The ratio of divorces per 10.000 existing marriages increased from 61.3 in 1980 to 81.0 in 1990 and 83.0 in 1993 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1995a: 78).

<sup>5</sup>The ratio of out-of-wedlock births per 100 live births increased from 7.6% in 1980 to 9.4% in 1985, 10.2% in 1989 and 11.9% in 1993 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1995a: 69).

<sup>6</sup>During the period from 1982 to 1989, the number of non-married couples increased by more than 50% from 516.000 to 842.000 (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1995a: 66). The proportion of lone parent families increased from 15.3% in 1982 to 17.6% in 1989 and 17.8% in 1992 (Statistisches Bundesamt 1994: 262 ff.).

turn lead to longer duration of social assistance and a decrease in recidivism. The increase in single-person-households, however, points into a different direction. Changing attitudes towards work, e.g. voluntary job mobility, and geographical mobility may also result in an increase in at least transitory poverty and a shortening of time off assistance.

*Changing attitudes towards social assistance:* Besides structural changes, changing attitudes towards social assistance may also exert an influence on use, duration of social assistance and recidivism. We assume that the stigma of social assistance has decreased, and that there are differences between age-groups with old people having still more difficulties in applying for social assistance than the younger generation.<sup>7</sup> This may result in more and/or longer spells of social assistance and shorter periods without assistance, at least for the young ones, as it becomes less difficult to apply or reapply („duration +“, „recidivism +“ and „time off –“).

*Housing market conditions:* Another factor which has probably influenced social assistance is the increasing housing shortage and the increase in rents especially in big cities.<sup>8</sup> This may result in longer spells, especially for families („duration +“ ), while we cannot foresee how this will affect recidivism and time off.

*To sum up, it is more difficult to predict the influence of social change on duration than it seems at first glance and than is expected by public opinion. And there is not only evidence for an increase in duration, but also for a shortening of spells.*

## 2 Temporal patterns of social assistance: the eighties versus the nineties

To find out if patterns of social assistance look different in the beginning of the nineties we will now compare the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts of new recipients of social assistance.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>However, we have no data to prove empirically if attitudes towards social assistance substantially changed during the eighties.

<sup>8</sup>In the first half of the eighties, rents increased by about 4% to 5% each year. In the following years 1986 to 1988 the yearly increase was less than 2%. Since then, however, rents have increased again by higher percentages, in 1989 and 1990 by 3%, in 1991 by 3.6%, in 1992 by 5%, in 1993 by 6% and in 1994 by 4.8% (cf. Statistisches Bundesamt 1995b).

<sup>9</sup>The data base is the Bremen 10% Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files (LSA), which has been drawn since 1987 by the Department of Women, Health, Youth,

The observation window for both cohorts is 69 months: The 1983 cohort was observed until the end of september 1988, the 1989 cohort until the end of september 1994. Our analysis is limited to people who receive „Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt“ (maintenance benefits). That is, we excluded those people from the analysis who only received „Hilfe in besonderen Lebenslagen“ (benefits for special needs), the second branch of the German social assistance system. Our unit of analysis are files or applicants for social assistance, respectively.<sup>10</sup> The 1983 cohort consists of 586 files or applicants, the 1989 cohort of 922 cases.

We will first look at the socio-demographic structure of the two cohorts and the causes of beginning and ending assistance. Has, for example, the proportion of lone parents increased and has the proportion of unemployed people decreased? As different social groups spend different time on assistance changes in the composition of social groups may in turn affect duration of receipt.

## **2.1 Socio-demographic structure and causes of beginning and ending assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts**

In the first section of our paper, we expected more immigrants among new recipients of social assistance in the new cohort. However, when we started data analysis we did not foresee that the change in the proportion of residence status groups<sup>11</sup> would be so momentous: On the one hand, the percentage of „German immigrants“, that is immigrants of German origin<sup>12</sup> from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and immigrants from the German Democratic Republic, and the percentage of „refugees“, e.g. applicants for political asylum, rose from 8% in the 1983 cohort to 46% in the new cohort (see figure 3). On the other hand, the proportion of „resident foreigners“, that is people of a foreign nationality who already have lived in Germany for a longer time, decreased from 11% to 7%, and the proportion of native Germans decreased from 81% to 46%. Even the absolute number of native German recipients is lower in

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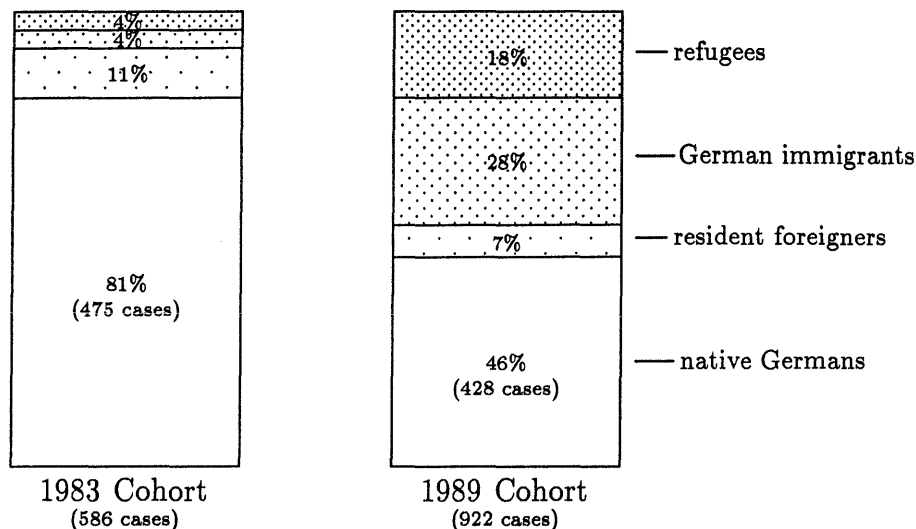
Social Affairs and Environment, Bremen, in collaboration with the Centre for Social Policy Research and the Special Research Center 186 at the University of Bremen.

<sup>10</sup>In the case of married couples, the applicant usually is the husband. Besides the applicant, several other persons in a family may receive social assistance from the same file.

<sup>11</sup>In a former version of this paper we used the notion „ethnic groups“.

<sup>12</sup>„Of German origin“ means that these immigrants are mostly legally recognized as „Germans“.

Figure 3: Residence status groups in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts



*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

the 1989 cohort as compared to the 1983 one. Thus, in the 1989 cohort, native Germans are in the minority, a fact that could not be deduced from the official statistics on social assistance.

*Immigration thus has become an important cause of social assistance in Germany which is responsible for a large proportion of the increase in the number of new recipients. If it were not for German immigrants and refugees the total flow of new cases would be lower in the 1989 cohort as compared to the early one.*

The increase in the number and proportion of German immigrants and refugees also affects the structure of the two cohorts according to gender, age, vocational qualification<sup>13</sup>, and family type as we obtain different results if we exclude German immigrants and refugees from the analysis

<sup>13</sup>Here we should note that our data which are derived from administrative files contain only sparse information on the level of qualification of the recipients. We have no data about years spent in school, and the data on vocational training are not very reliable or missing in a lot of cases. Therefore, we only differentiate between two groups: a) recipients with vocational training (including a university degree), b) recipients who have no formal vocational qualification or for whom there is no information about level of qualification in the file, respectively.



(see table 1A in the appendix). In the total population, the proportion of men and recipients with vocational qualification has increased in the new cohort as compared to the 1983 cohort which may lead to a shortening of time on assistance as these groups have lower than average duration.<sup>14</sup>

Table 1: Causes of beginning and ending social assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

	<i>Percent</i>			
	<i>All cases</i>		<i>Residents<sup>1</sup></i>	
	1983	1989	1983	1989
<b>Causes of entering social assistance</b>				
unemployed, waiting	32.3	37.4**	32.5	26.6**
unemployed, not waiting	25.2	17.0**	27.0	30.2
other causes, waiting	4.1	6.1*	3.2	5.3*
other causes, not waiting	38.4	39.5	37.4	37.9
waiting (total)	36.4	43.5**	35.7	31.9
unemployed (total)	57.5	54.4	59.5	56.8
<b>Causes of ending social assistance</b>				
work	16.2	16.9	16.2	21.5**
other transfers/social security	28.5	31.8	27.3	24.3
marriage	3.2	1.8*	3.2	2.8
other causes	33.8	35.1	34.4	31.6
still in receipt	18.3	14.3**	19.0	19.7

<sup>1</sup> native Germans and resident foreigners. \*\* difference between cohorts significant at the 5% level. \* difference between cohorts significant at the 10% level. Deviation from 100% is due to rounding errors.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, however, we find lower proportions of recipients with vocational qualification and higher proportions of female recipients in the 1989 cohort which in turn could lead to longer duration.

In accordance with our expectations, there is also a higher proportion of

<sup>14</sup>We should note, however, that the formal level of qualification of German immigrants is not always strictly comparable to German standards.

lone parents in the new cohort: In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, the proportion of lone parents increased from 10.4% in the 1983 cohort to 15.2% in the 1989 cohort, compared to a smaller increase from 10.2% to 12.4% for all cases. In the total population, the proportion of married and non-married couples with children increased, too. In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, however, the proportion of married couples with children decreased, while that of non-married couples increased. The distribution of age groups, finally, remained nearly unchanged. This holds true for the total population and the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners.

As to the causes of beginning social assistance, in the 1983 cohort more than one third of all recipients were „waiting cases“ (see table 1): They only had to apply for social assistance because they had to wait for other transfers to be paid (mostly unemployment benefits and, to a lower extent, old age pensions). These waiting cases indicate poverty produced by the welfare state itself (cf. Leisering/Voges 1993). Overall, the percentage of waiting cases has increased from 36.4% in the 1983 cohort to 43.5% in the 1989 cohort. This change can be attributed to the increase in the number of German immigrants in the 1989 cohort: More than 90% of them are just waiting for other transfers. If we only look at the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, the proportion of waiting cases has decreased from 35.7% to 31.9%.

All in all, unemployment has lost some of its importance as a cause for social assistance in the 1989 cohort. This holds for the total population and for the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners. The proportion of recipients who enter social assistance because of unemployment decreased from 57.5% to 54.4% and from 59.5% to 56.8%, respectively. However, we have to differentiate between different groups of the unemployed: Overall, due to the increase in the number of German immigrants, the proportion of unemployed waiting cases is higher in the 1989 cohort as compared to the 1983 one, while the proportion of recipients with no or insufficient unemployment benefits („unemployed, not waiting“ ) has decreased. Unemployed waiting cases are mostly short-term recipients, while the other group of the unemployed usually stays longer on assistance. Thus, this structural change may result in shorter durations in the new cohort. In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, there is an opposite trend: The proportion of unemployed waiting cases decreased, the proportion of unemployed recipients who are not waiting increased which could in turn lead to longer duration in the 1989 cohort.

The interpretation of these trends is not yet clear. The decrease in the proportion of unemployed waiting recipients in the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners may be due to the better conditions on the labor market at the end of the eighties mentioned above. It is also possible that the unemployment agencies work more effectively at the end of the eighties or that unemployed people who are waiting for the first payment of unemployment benefits can do longer without money because of more savings or help from friends or relatives. The increase in the proportion of unemployed recipients who are not waiting, but have to supplement insufficient unemployment benefits by social assistance, may reflect insecure and irregular patterns of employment in combination with changes in the eligibility rules for unemployment benefits.

As to the causes of ending assistance, around thirty percent of the recipients in the two cohorts leave social assistance because of other transfers, e.g. unemployment benefits, being paid (see again table 1). In the 1989 cohort, this is even more important than in the earlier cohort reflecting the increase in waiting cases reported above. About one sixth of the recipients leave social assistance by taking up work. Overall, this proportion has remained nearly unchanged in the 1989 cohort. Contrary to the overall trend, in the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, the proportion of recipients leaving by other transfers decreased following the decrease in the proportion of waiting cases, while the proportion of recipients who leave by work has increased from 16.2% to 21.5%. This increase is mainly due to special employment programs for recipients of social assistance: In the 1989 cohort, 4.2% of the recipients left social assistance by employment aid, whereas in the 1983 cohort these programs only played a minor role. In contrast to, e.g., the USA, marriage is not an important route out of assistance in Germany. One third of the recipients leave by „other causes“, like increasing income from employment, education or vocational training, move to other cities, voluntary renouncement, or they simply do not show up again.

*All in all, the most marked finding is the new role immigrants play in the clientele of German social assistance. Leaving this group aside, the socio-demographic structure of the two cohorts and the causes of beginning and ending assistance have changed little, and many of the observed differences between the two cohorts are statistically not significant. The decrease in the proportion of unemployed waiting recipients who are mainly short-term cases and the increase in the proportion of women, recipients without vocational qualification, lone-parents and unemployed people not just waiting for unemployment benefits could result in longer time on as-*

*sistance in the new cohort, at least in the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, as the latter groups had longer than average duration in the 1983 cohort.*

## 2.2 Temporal patterns of receipt in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

In the total population, the proportion of recipients who are still (or again) in receipt at the end of the observation period of 69 months decreased from 18.3% in the 1983 cohort to 14.3% in the 1989 one (see again table 1). This already points towards a shortening of social assistance careers. No such trend, however, can be observed in the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners: In both cohorts about one fifth of the recipients are still in receipt at the end of the observation period.

In the following we analyze patterns of duration in more detail. First, we compare the distribution of duration, e.g. the extent of short-term and long-term receipt in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts. We use different concepts of measuring duration and differentiate by social groups. Is it more difficult to leave social assistance in the 1989 cohort? We will then look at recidivism. Do recipients have fewer or more spells on assistance in the 1989 cohort? If recidivism is higher in the 1989 cohort this would be an indicator that it is more difficult to leave social assistance permanently from the end of the eighties than it was at the beginning. An increase in discontinuity would point towards more instability during the life course, e.g. due to discontinuous employment careers. Finally, we look at time off assistance. How long does it take until a second spell of assistance begins? What are the underlying factors, e.g. which characteristics of recipients and which causes of ending the first spell lead to longer time off? The shorter the period without assistance, the more difficult it seems to reach stable economic conditions and to live independent of social assistance permanently.

### *Time on assistance*

Whereas earlier research in the USA concentrated on the duration of single spells, it is now widely accepted that a single spell concept is misleading if we want to know how long people are dependent on social assistance. The reason is that many people have several spells of social assistance, interrupted by shorter or longer periods of independence. Thus,

by referring only to the duration of single spells or the duration of the first spell total time on assistance is underestimated. In this paper we use two descriptive measures of total duration: „net duration“ - the sum of single spells of social assistance - and „gross duration“ - the time period between the first and last payment including interruptions. As there is no reliable theoretically or empirically based definition of short-term and long-term poverty we adopt a somewhat arbitrary definition: courses of social assistance lasting up to one year are defined as short-term, those lasting more than five years as long-term.

Table 2: Expected time on social assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Median (months)</i>	<i>Years on social assistance</i>					
		0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	> 5
<i>First spell (percent)</i>							
1983	4	74	9	4	3	2	8
1989	5	72	13	5	2	2	6
<i>Net duration (percent)</i>							
1983	8	56	12	7	5	4	15
1989	9	58	17	7	4	2	12
<i>Gross duration (percent)</i>							
1983	15	47	10	7	6	11	19
1989	12	50	15	6	6	7	16

Deviation from 100% is due to rounding errors.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

If we look at the distribution of duration<sup>15</sup> in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts (see table 2), we obtain several findings: *First*, the differences between the two cohorts are only small. *Second*, the proportion of short-term and long-term receipt differs according to the concept of measuring duration. For example, the proportion of short-term receipt ranges from more than 70% for the first spell to about 50% with regard to gross duration. *Third*, there is no uniform trend for the three concepts of

<sup>15</sup>As some people are still in receipt at the end of the observation period („right censored cases“), long-term receipt is underestimated if we only look at the duration measured at the day of enquiry. In this paper, we use methods which allow to estimate the expected duration for the right censored cases and thus reach different results than in earlier publications.

measuring duration. While first spells last longer in the 1989 cohort (as indicated by an increase in median duration from 4 to 5 months and a decrease in short-term receipt), total duration decreased: As to gross duration, the median decreased from 15 to 12 months. The proportion of social assistance careers lasting up to 12 months increased from 47% to 50%, those lasting more than 60 months decreased from 19% to 16%. As to net duration, the median slightly increased from 8.4 to 8.7 months. The proportion of short-term receipt, however, increased, too, while the proportion of long-term receipt decreased: In the 1983 cohort, 56% of the recipients left social assistance within the first year; in the 1989 cohort, it was 58%. In the 1983 cohort, 15% of recipients were still on assistance after five years; in the 1989 cohort, it was 12%.

Table 3: Expected time on social assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts (native Germans and resident foreigners only)

<i>Cohort</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Years on social assistance</i>					
	(months)	0-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	>5
<i>First spell (percent)</i>							
1983	4	74	9	3	3	2	8
1989	6	70	14	3	3	2	8
<i>Net duration (percent)</i>							
1983	8	55	13	7	5	4	16
1989	12	51	18	6	4	3	17
<i>Gross duration (percent)</i>							
1983	18	45	10	7	6	11	21
1989	17	41	15	6	7	10	22

Deviation from 100% is due to rounding errors.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

*Thus, in contrast to public opinion, recipients do not stay longer on social assistance in the nineties than in the eighties, at least if we refer to total duration.*

However, this decline in total duration, has to be seen in the context of the different socio-demographic structure of the two cohorts. If we exclude migrants, that is German immigrants and refugees, from the analysis, we obtain different results (see table 3): According to all concepts of measuring duration, we find an increase in the median duration and/or

lower proportions of short-term receipt and higher proportions of long-term receipt in the 1989 cohort. The median duration of the first spell increased by two months from 4 to 6 months, the proportion of short-term receipt decreased from 74% to 70%, while long-term receipt remained stable at 8%. As to net duration, the median increased from 8 to 12 months. Short-term receipt declined from 55% to 51%, and long-term receipt increased from 16% to 17%. The median duration of the gross duration slightly decreased from 18 to 17 months. However, the proportion of recipients who already have left assistance after one year, decreased, too, from 45% to 41%, and the proportion of long-term recipients increased from 21% to 22%.

*Thus, the observed decline in total duration is induced by the increase in the proportion of German immigrants and refugees. In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, recipients stay slightly longer on assistance in the 1989 cohort as compared to the early one.*

The increase in total duration among native Germans and resident foreigners is mainly induced by the decrease in the proportion of waiting cases and unemployed waiting cases, respectively, in this subgroup which was reported above. Waiting cases stay mostly short-term on assistance until other social transfers are paid. If we only look at those recipients who are not waiting median gross and net duration have decreased in the new cohort and the proportion of short-term and long-term receipt remained more or less stable. As we will see below there are not only fewer waiting cases in the new cohort, but waiting cases also stay longer on assistance.

In the following we will look more closely at the differences in duration by residential status, socio-demographic variables and causes of assistance.

In the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts, German immigrants stay shortest on assistance. This holds true for all measures of duration. In the 1989 cohort, the median net duration, for example, is five months for German immigrants, eight months for refugees and about 12 months for native Germans and resident foreigners (see table 2A in the appendix). The reason for the high proportion of short-term receipt among German immigrants is that most of them just wait for unemployment benefits.

Time on assistance also differs by age group, level of qualification, family type, and causes of social assistance with long-term receipt being more common among women, young people, the elderly, recipients without vocational qualification, recipients with (small) children, lone parents

and non-unemployed recipients (see again table 2A). As to the differences between the two cohorts, again we obtain different results if we exclude migrants from the analysis (see table 3A in the appendix). In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners all social groups but the elderly stay longer on assistance in the 1989 cohort. However, only few of the observed differences are statistically significant, especially according to gross duration, and the trend is not uniform for all measures of duration.<sup>16</sup>

What about the unemployed, a group that is commonly perceived as the key problem group? All in all, unemployed recipients stay longer on assistance at the end of the eighties than at the beginning: The median duration of the first spell, net and gross duration have increased in the 1989 cohort as compared to the early one (see again tables 2A and 3A). Is it thus more difficult to leave social assistance for unemployed people at the end of the eighties? Further analysis shows that this pattern only holds true for one subgroup of the unemployed, those just waiting for unemployment benefits to be paid. In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, the median duration of the first spell increased from one month to two months, median net duration increased from three to six months, and median gross duration from 6 to 12 months (see again table 3A). Waiting cases, that is people entering social assistance because they are waiting for unemployment benefits to be paid, thus stay longer on assistance in the 1989 cohort as compared to 1983.<sup>17</sup> For unemployed people who are not waiting, however, there is little change in duration over time.

We have to take into account that total duration is made up of three aspects of time: the duration of single spells, the number of spells („recidivism“), and time off social assistance. Changes in these dimensions may help to explain some of the observed changes in total duration. As to the duration of single spells, we have already seen that first spells last longer in the 1989 cohort (see again tables 2 and 3). The same holds true for second spells, which also increased from four to five months, while

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<sup>16</sup> According to lone parents, for example, the median duration of the first spell has increased from 6 to 13 months, whereas gross and net duration have decreased which can be attributed to the fact that the proportion of lone parents with multiple spells decreased, too.

<sup>17</sup> We should note that the causes of social assistance may change from one spell of assistance to another. A recipient who first receives social assistance because of waiting for unemployment benefits may have a second or third spell for other causes, such as illness. This may partly explain the increase in total duration among waiting cases.



the duration of third spells decreased from three to two months. In the following we analyze the extent of recidivism or discontinuity and time off social assistance in more detail.

### *Continuity and discontinuity*

In the 1989 cohort, careers of social assistance seem to be more continuous than in 1983: The mean number of spells decreased from 1.7 to 1.5. The proportion of recipients with only one spell on assistance increased from 61% to 69% (see table 4). This decrease in discontinuity may be one reason for the observed decrease in gross duration. However, the proportion of recipients with extremely discontinuous careers - six and more spells - increased, too, from 1% to 1.3% which points towards a polarization process.

Table 4: Continuity and discontinuity in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

<i>Spells</i>	<i>Percent</i>					
	<i>All cases</i>			<i>Residents<sup>1</sup></i>		
	1983	1989	<i>Difference</i>	1983	1989	<i>Difference</i>
1	60.6	69.2	<i>+ 8.6</i>	58.6	62.1	<i>+ 3.5</i>
2-5	38.4	29.5	<i>- 8.9</i>	40.3	35.7	<i>- 4.6</i>
6-8	1.0	1.3	<i>+ 0.3</i>	1.1	2.2	<i>+ 1.1</i>
	100%	100%		100%	100%	
<i>N</i>	<i>(586)</i>	<i>(922)</i>		<i>(538)</i>	<i>(493)</i>	

<sup>1</sup> native Germans and resident foreigners.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

Again, it is the increase in the number of German immigrants and refugees that accounts for the change in recidivism: If fewer migrants had applied for social assistance in 1989, we would obtain different results. Overall, the proportion of recipients with multiple spells decreased by nearly 10% from 40% to 30%. If we exclude migrants from the analysis, recidivism only slightly decreased from 41% in the 1983 cohort to 38% in the 1989 cohort (see again table 4).

The reason is that migrants have fewer spells compared with native Germans and resident foreigners (see table 4A in the appendix).

The risk of having a second or further spell also differs by socio-demographic variables and causes of assistance with men, young people and couples with children having a somewhat higher risk of recidivism. If we compare the two cohorts, in the total population, all social and residence status groups but German immigrants have experienced multiple spells less frequently. However, again, only few of the observed differences between the two cohorts are statistically significant, and we obtain a different result if we exclude migrants from the analysis. In the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, recidivism has increased among other households and young people in the 1989 cohort (see again table 4A).

*Young people thus have more and longer spells on assistance in the 1989 cohort. This may indicate that this groups has difficulties in entering a stable labor market position, it may also testify to our hypothesis that social assistance may have lost some of its stigma especially among youth.*

Recidivism is also above average among waiting cases and unemployed recipients. Over time, we find an increase in discontinuity among unemployed waiting cases in the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners which may explain some of the increase in total duration for this group. Among the non-waiting unemployed, however, recidivism has declined which may point towards more stability in the life course (see again table 4A).

*Thus it does not seem to be more difficult to escape social assistance permanently for the unemployed which may reflect the better conditions on the labor market at the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties. Unemployed people who are not waiting do not stay longer on assistance in the 1989 cohort and have fewer spells of assistance. However, as yet, we cannot fully explain the increase in recidivism and total duration among unemployed waiting cases.*

Also the causes of ending the first spell exert an influence on recidivism (see again table 4A): In the 1983 cohort, recipients who leave because of the payment of other transfers and recipients who leave because they start to work had a high risk of having a second spell. In the 1989 cohort, however, things have changed: As to the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners, in the 1983 cohort, 51% of the recipients who ended social assistance by finding a job had to reapply further or later. In the

1989 cohort, the percentage has significantly decreased to 36% which is below average in this subgroup. This could mean that due to the better conditions on the labor market working careers are more stable in the 1989 cohort. First spells, however, last longer for this group of recipients (see again table 3A). *That is, it takes longer to escape social assistance by finding a job in the new cohort, but if so, chances are that social assistance has been overcome permanently.*

### *Time off assistance*

In total, the time elapsed between the end of the first and the beginning of the second spell for those people who have a second spell increased by one month, from seven months in the early cohort to eight months in the later cohort. In the resident population, the increase was two months, from seven to nine months (see table 5A in the appendix). That is, in the 1989 cohort, ex-recipients can live slightly longer without social assistance than in 1983 before they have to reapply. The time period between the second and third spell increased, too, from four to six months, while the time period between the third and fourth spell decreased, from five to four months. None of these differences, however, is statistically significant.

There are some differences by residential status, sociodemographic variables and causes of social assistance (see again table 5A). In the 1989 cohort, the median time off assistance is about ten months for native Germans and resident foreigners, but only seven months for German immigrants and five months for refugees. *Thus, migrants have shorter and fewer spells, but have to reapply earlier than native Germans and resident foreigners.*

If we compare the two cohorts, recipients with small children, couples with children, and recipients with causes of entering social assistance other than unemployment have to reapply earlier in the new cohort. Native Germans and German immigrants, single men and women, recipients without children, waiting cases, unemployed people, however, can do longer without social assistance in the 1989 cohort. *Thus, while it has become more difficult to gain permanent self-sufficiency for recipients with children, the situation seems to have improved for other groups of recipients.*

### 3 Concluding remarks

The aim of our paper was to analyze the impact of social change on social assistance by comparing two cohorts of new recipients of social assistance in a German city. Do social assistance careers last longer in the nineties due to social, economic and political changes?

Overall, the empirical evidence points against longer lasting social assistance careers in the nineties as compared to the eighties. While first spells last longer, total duration has decreased which is partly due to the decrease in the proportion of recipients with multiple spells. The time elapsed before the second spell begins has slightly increased by one month.

However, the two cohorts differ in one important point: In the 1989 cohort, nearly 50% of the new recipients are German immigrants and refugees as compared to 8% in the early cohort. If immigration had not become such an important cause for social assistance in Germany, the number of new recipients in the 1989 cohort would have been lower than in the 1983 one, total duration would be somewhat higher, recidivism would have remained nearly unchanged, and recipients would stay longer off assistance.

Immigration thus exerts a strong influence on social assistance, while it is more difficult to evaluate the impact of other social and economic forces. That the composition of different groups of the unemployed has changed and that it seems somewhat easier to leave social assistance permanently by work in the 1989 cohort, may indicate that labor market conditions influence social assistance. The increase in the proportion of lone parent families in the subgroup of native Germans and resident foreigners may reflect the ongoing process of individualization, increasing recidivism among young people may be due to changing attitudes towards social assistance, and longer duration among couples with children may have to do with increasing rents. Compared to immigration, however, the effect of these factors seems to be low.

That native Germans and resident foreigners stay longer on assistance in the new cohort is probably mainly due to changes in the composition of this group, especially the decrease in the proportion of „unemployed waiting cases“, who leave social assistance quickly after a short period of waiting for unemployment benefits to be paid. Few signs indicate, however, that the chances to leave social assistance have deteriorated

dramatically over time, as sometimes thought by left-wing politicians, welfare organisations and social workers, or that recipients are more inclined to settle in, as sometimes thought by conservative politicians and business associations.

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## 5 Appendix

Table 1 A: Socio-demographic structure of the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Percent</i>			
	<i>All cases</i>		<i>Residents<sup>1</sup></i>	
	1983	1989	1983	1989
<b>Gender</b>				
male	60.2	63.3	58.5	50.3**
female	39.8	36.7	41.5	49.7**
<b>Age<sup>2</sup></b>				
up to 20 years	22.8	20.9	24.8	23.7
21 to 50 years	67.1	70.0	66.1	68.0
51 years and more	10.1	9.1	9.1	8.3
(average	31.5	31.1	30.9	30.2)
<b>Qualification<sup>2</sup></b>				
vocational qualification	53.6	56.1	52.0	49.3
no vocational qualification	46.4	43.9	48.0	50.7
<b>Children<sup>2</sup></b>				
no children	75.8	70.6**	75.8	72.8
children	24.2	29.4**	24.2	27.2
children under 3 years	9.2	11.6	9.7	13.0*
<b>Type of Household<sup>2</sup></b>				
lone parents	10.2	12.4	10.4	15.2**
couples with children	13.3	15.6	13.0	11.2
<i>married</i>	10.9	11.6	10.4	5.5**
<i>non-married</i>	2.4	4.0*	2.6	5.7**
single women	13.6	12.1	14.3	18.4**
single men	28.5	27.2	27.1	22.1*
others	34.4	32.6	35.2	33.1

<sup>1</sup> native Germans and resident foreigners. <sup>2</sup> measured at beginning of social assistance.

\*\* difference between cohorts significant at the 5% level. \* difference between cohorts significant at the 10% level. Deviation from 100% is due to rounding errors.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.



Table 2 A: Time on social assistance by residential status, social groups and causes for assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

Groups	Median (months)					
	First spell		Gross		Net	
	1983	1989	1983	1989	1983	1989
<b>Residence status groups</b>						
native Germans	4	5**	18	18	9	12**
resident foreigners	3	6**	20	15	8	12
German immigrants	2	3	3	6*	3	5
refugees	12	6	18	8	15	8
<b>Gender</b>						
male	3	4**	14	10	7	7
female	6	7	19	15	13	12
<b>Age<sup>1</sup></b>						
up to 20 years	7	8	26	22	18	15
21 to 50 years	3	4**	11	10	6	7
51 years and more	8	7	17	13	13	10
<b>Qualification<sup>1</sup></b>						
vocational qualification	2	3**	10	9	5	6
no vocational qualification	7	7	22	16	15	13
<b>Children<sup>1</sup></b>						
no children	3	4	13	10	8	7
children	5	7**	28	16	14	13
children under 3 years	5	11**	32	20	18	15
<b>Type of Household<sup>1</sup></b>						
lone parents	6	11	34	20	26	16
couples with children	4	4	23	14	10	9
single women	6	5	13	13	9	11
single men	2	3	10	7	5	5
others	4	5	15	12	9	9
<b>Causes of entering social assistance</b>						
unemployed, waiting	1	2**	5	6	3	4**
unemployed, not waiting	6	6	18	17	10	11
other causes, not waiting	9	9	29	13**	19	12
waiting (total)	1	3**	6	8	3	5**
unemployed (total)	2	3**	9	10	6	6
<b>Causes of ending social assistance<sup>2</sup></b>						
work	5	9	25	15	14	12
other transfers/social security	1	2**	5	4	3	4*
marriage	6	12*	13	21	9	16
other causes	5	5	8	8	6	7
All cases	4	5**	15	12	8	9

<sup>1</sup> measured at beginning of social assistance. <sup>2</sup> First spell: causes of ending first spell.

\*\* difference between cohorts significant at the 5% level. \* difference between cohorts significant at the 10% level.

Data base: Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

Table 3 A: Time on social assistance by social groups and causes for assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts (native Germans and resident foreigners only)

Groups	Median (months)					
	First spell		Gross		Net	
	1983	1989	1983	1989	1983	1989
<b>Gender</b>						
male	2	4**	15	15	6	8
female	6	8*	20	22	15	14
<b>Age<sup>1</sup></b>						
up to 20 years	7	9**	26	41*	18	20
21 to 50 years	3	4**	12	13	6	10**
51 years and more	7	5	37	12	20	10
<b>Qualification<sup>1</sup></b>						
vocational qualification	2	4**	9	13	5	9**
no vocational qualification	7	7	24	27	16	15
<b>Children<sup>1</sup></b>						
no children	3	4**	14	14	8	9
children	5	12**	30	29	16	19
children under 3 years	4	13**	32	35	17	21**
<b>Type of Household<sup>1</sup></b>						
lone parents	6	13**	36	33	28	21
couples with children	4	8**	24	27	10	15**
single women	6	7	15	15	9	12
single men	2	3	11	10	5	6
others	4	5	15	21	9	11
<b>Causes of entering social assistance</b>						
unemployed, waiting	1	2**	6	12**	3	6**
unemployed, not waiting	6	6	18	16	10	11
other causes, not waiting	8	11	31	22	19	16
waiting (total)	1	3**	6	13**	4	6**
unemployed (total)	2	3**	10	14*	6	9**
<b>Causes of ending social assistance<sup>2</sup></b>						
work	5	8*	26	13	13	12
other transfers/social security	1	2**	5	6	3	5**
marriage	6	10	13	16	9	14
other causes	5	6	8	10	6	8
<b>All cases</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6**</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12**</b>

<sup>1</sup> measured at beginning of social assistance. <sup>2</sup> First spell: causes of ending first spell.  
 \*\* difference between cohorts significant at the 5% level. \* difference between cohorts significant at the 10% level.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

Table 4 A: Recidivism by residential status, social groups and causes for assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Percent with multiple spells</i>			
	<i>All cases</i>		<i>Residents<sup>1</sup></i>	
	1983	1989	1983	1989
<b>Residence status groups</b>				
native Germans	40	39		
resident foreigners	49	34		
German immigrants	17	29		
refugees	17	13		
<b>Gender</b>				
male	42	31**	44	43
female	36	30	37	33
<b>Age<sup>2</sup></b>				
up to 20 years	44	38	44	48
21 to 50 years	39	31**	42	37
51 years and more	29	17	31	17
<b>Qualification<sup>2</sup></b>				
vocational qualification	42	32**	44	37
no vocational qualification	37	30	38	39
<b>Children<sup>2</sup></b>				
no children	39	30**	41	38
children	42	32**	44	37
children under 3 years	44	36	44	41
<b>Type of Household<sup>2</sup></b>				
lone parents	39	31	42	28*
couples with children	46	34*	46	47
single women	33	26	34	25
single men	41	31**	45	43
others	38	31	40	43
<b>Causes of entering social assistance</b>				
unemployed, waiting	42	38	44	47
unemployed, not waiting	46	38	46	37
other causes, not waiting	34	23**	36	33
waiting (total)	41	35	44	45
unemployed (total)	44	38*	45	42
<b>Causes of ending first spell of social assistance</b>				
work	48	35**	51	36**
other transfers/social security	46	35**	50	45
marriage	20	28	23	33
other causes	40	30**	41	42
<b>All cases</b>	39	31**	41	38

<sup>1</sup> native Germans and resident foreigners. <sup>2</sup> measured at beginning of social assistance.

\*\* difference between cohorts significant at the 5% level. \* difference between cohorts significant at the 10% level.

*Data base:* Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.

Table 5 A: Time off assistance by residential status, social groups and causes for assistance in the 1983 and the 1989 cohorts (cases with second spell only)

Groups	Median (months)			
	All cases		Residents <sup>1</sup>	
	1983	1989	1983	1989
<b>Residence status groups</b>				
native Germans	7	9		
resident foreigners	9	10		
German immigrants	5	7		
refugees	5	5		
<b>Gender</b>				
male	8	7	9	9
female	5	9	5	8
<b>Age<sup>2</sup></b>				
up to 20 years	8	7	8	7
21 to 50 years	7	8	7	9
51 years and more	7	5	7	6
<b>Qualification<sup>2</sup></b>				
vocational qualification	9	8	9	9
no vocational qualification	6	8	6	8
<b>Children<sup>2</sup></b>				
no children	6	8	6	9
children	12	7	13	7
children under 3 years	16	6**	17	6**
<b>Type of Household<sup>2</sup></b>				
lone parents	6	6	6	6
couples with children	13	10	14	8
single women	4	10*	4	10
single men	6	7	6	9
others	8	7	8	9
<b>Causes of entering social assistance</b>				
unemployed, waiting	7	9	7	10
unemployed, not waiting	5	10**	5	10**
other causes, not waiting	11	6**	12	6**
waiting (total)	7	9	7	9
unemployed (total)	6	9*	6	10**
<b>Causes of ending first spell of social assistance</b>				
work	7	7	7	8
other transfers/social security	8	9	9	10
marriage	21	21	21	21
other causes	6	5	6	6
<b>All cases</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>

<sup>1</sup> native Germans and resident foreigners. <sup>2</sup> measured at beginning of social assistance.

\*\* difference between cohorts significant at the 5% level. \* difference between cohorts significant at the 10% level.

Data base: Bremen Longitudinal Sample of Social Assistance Files; Dep. of Women, Health, Youth, Social Affairs and Environment, state of Bremen; Center for Social Policy Research and Special Research Center 186, University of Bremen.